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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY EVALUATION PLAN FOR QATAR

REFS: (A) 76 DOHA 360, (B) DOHA 718

1. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY COMMENTS ON FOLLOWING
DRAFT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN BY JUNE 27.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY EVALUATION PLAN FOR QATAR --
BACKGROUND.

THE START OF OIL PRODUCTION IN 1949 AND THE HIGH REVENUES
FROM OIL IN THE 1970'S HAVE TRANSFORMED QATAR'S CAPITAL OF
DOHA FROM A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE INTO A BUSY COMMERCIAL
TOWN. DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE COUNTRY ARE AMBITIOUS
WITH THE EMPHASIS ON CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SCHOOLS, ROADS,
HOSPITALS AND HOUSING.

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DESPITE THE PROGRESS BROUGHT BY NEW OIL WEALTH, QATAR'S
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE REMAINS VERY CONSERVATIVE.
POLITICALLY, THE COUNTRY IS DOMINATED BY THE RULING AL-THANI
FAMILY WHOSE MEMBERSHIP AND TIES MAY EXTEND TO AS MANY AS
20,000 OUT OF A TOTAL NATIVE POPULATION ESTIMATED AT
60,000. THERE ARE AN ADDITIONAL 100,000 FOREIGNERS LIVING
IN THE COUNTRY. THE PATTERN OF THE AMIR'S RULE IS TRIBAL
IN NATURE AND MANY OF HIS DECISIONS ARE MADE AFTER SEEKING
CONSENSUS FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE RULING FAMILY AND
PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. IN ACCORDANCE WITH

THE BASIC LAW OF 1970, THE AMIR HAS ESTABLISHED AN ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH ACTS AS A FORMAL CONSULTATIVE BODY BUT IT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON DELEGATION OF POWER FROM THE AMIR. QATAR IS A CONSERVATIVE STATE WHERE ISLAMIC LAW AND TRADITION SHAPE THE TRADITIONAL VALUES WHICH PRE-DOMINATE. IN THIS RESPECT, QATAR IS VERY SIMILAR TO NEIGHBORING SAUDI ARABIA, WITH WHICH IT HAS CLOSE TIES.

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN QATAR

(1) RESPECT FOR INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM A.) TORTURE, B.) CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT, C.) ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT, D.) DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL, E.) INVASION OF THE HOME. A PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION KNOWN AS THE "BASIC LAW" WRITTEN IN 1970 HAS THE EQUIVALENT OF A BILL OF RIGHTS WHICH GUARANTEES ALL PERSONS EQUAL STATUS BEFORE THE LAW, INVIOABILITY OF HOME AND PERSON AND INCLUDES THE PRINCIPLE THAT AN ACCUSED PERSON IS INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY. U.S. OFFICIALS IN THE COUNTRY ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY INSTANCES OF TORTURE OR DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGES OR OF THE PRESENCE OF ANY POLITICAL PRISONERS. OCCASIONALLY, POLITICAL DISSIDENTS ARE EXILED BUT THEN PERMITTED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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RETURN AFTER SUITABLE "COOLING OFF" PERIODS. ALTHOUGH ISLAMIC LAW PROVIDES FOR PUNISHMENTS SUCH AS BEHEADING OR CUTTING OFF OF A HAND, NO SUCH PUNISHMENTS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT IN RECENT YEARS.

(2) RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY. QATAR CAN BE GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS FREE IN THESE REGARDS. CHRISTIANS ARE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION IN THE COUNTRY. THE DEEP CONSERVATISM RUNNING THROUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE NATIVE QATARI POPULATION TENDS TO STIFLE PUBLIC POLITICAL DISSENT. THERE IS FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY BUT GATHERINGS OF A POLITICAL NATURE ARE SUBJECT TO PERMISSION BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION POLICIES. GOVERNMENT POLICY PERMITS FREEDOM OF TRAVEL WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND AS WELL FREEDOM TO TRAVEL ABROAD.

C. DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES. THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PARTIES NOR ELECTIONS. THE AMIR SEEMS COMMITTED TO MOVE, ALBEIT SLOWLY, IN THE DIRECTION OF MORE POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. THE TRADITION OF SEEKING WIDE CONSENSUS FOR DECISIONS GUARANTEES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONSULTATION.

(3) RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO PROVIDE BASIC

NEEDS.

A. POLICIES WHICH RESPOND TO NEEDS OF THE POOR OR IGNORE NEEDS OF THE POOR. QATAR HAS A COMPREHENSIVE AND GENEROUS SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM TO PROVIDE GOODS AND SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. ITS BUDGET ALLOTMENTS FOR THIS HAS INCREASED EVERY YEAR. NON-QATARI WORKERS WHO MAKE UP A LARGE PART OF THE POPULATION ENJOY SOME OF THESE BENEFITS BUT NOT TO THE EXTENT OF THE NATIVE QATARIS.
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B. CORRUPTION DIVERTING RESOURCES TO ELITES AND AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION. COMMERCIAL LAWS CALLING FOR PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS HAVE ASSURED THAT THE OIL WEALTH HAS BEEN WIDELY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, MAJOR BUSINESS VENTURES AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES SEEM TO BE THE PRESERVE OF SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE RULING FAMILY AND WELL-CONNECTED BUSINESSMEN. IT IS DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO DOCUMENT CASES OF CORRUPTION OR BRIBERY IN BUSINESS DEALINGS; HOWEVER, IT IS LIKELY THAT THERE IS SOME MEASURE OF TRUTH TO ALLEGATIONS IN THIS REGARD.

(4) THE RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF QATAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS GOOD. THERE MAY BE INSTANCES OF SUMMARY ARREST AND DETENTION WHEN POLICE OFFICIALS ARE SEARCHING FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, SMUGGLERS OR RADICAL ELEMENTS SPONSORED BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY DOCUMENTED CASES OF SUCH ARRESTS OR DETENTION.

(5) THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN QATAR BY OUTSIDE GROUPS.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) THERE ARE SEVERAL SPECIFIC AREAS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON WHICH THE USG COULD FOCUS IN THE COMING YEAR WITH THE HOPE OF EFFECTING MINOR CHANGES AND GAINING MORE INFORMATION. BEYOND QUIET DIPLOMACY AND EXAMPLE, THE U.S. HAS LITTLE ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL LEVERAGE ON QATAR. AS A WEALTHY OIL PRODUCER, ITS FAVORS ARE SOUGHT BY MANY INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS AND ITS GROWING CONTRIBUTION TO POOR, DEVELOPING STATES HAS WON IT MANY FRIENDS.
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QATAR'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. HAS GROWN MORE FRIENDLY IN RECENT YEARS AS U.S. EXPORTS TO THE COUNTRY HAD INCREASED, MORE QATARI STUDENTS HAVE SELECTED THE UNITED STATES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED FOR USG TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS.

QATAR ENCOURAGES U.S. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND STABILITY IN THE PERSIAN GULF. IN EXPLORING THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES THEN, THE U.S. IS DEALING WITH A FRIENDLY NATION, WHICH WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT AND EXCHANGE VIEWS.

(A) OBJECTIVES: STATUS OF WOMEN -- THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN QATAR IS DETERMINED BY ISLAMIC LAW, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT LEGALLY, WOMEN ARE HELD TO BE INFERIOR TO MEN. THIS VIEWPOINT IS SUPPORTED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS (ALL MALE) AND THE MAJORITY OF THE MALE POPULATION AND IS ACCEPTED, IF NOT SUPPORTED, BY A LARGE SEGMENT OF QATAR'S FEMALE POPULATION.

SOCIALLY, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME STIRRINGS IN THE DIRECTION OF EQUALITY. THE AMIR IS THOUGHT TO RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE STATUS OF WOMEN, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT FROM THE ENTRANCE OF WOMEN INTO THE WORK FORCE. SOME WOMEN HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED FOR EMPLOYMENT IN TELEVISION AND RADIO OR AS TELEPHONE OPERATORS.

THE U.S. SHOULD ENCOURAGE CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WHICH BRING QATARI WOMEN TO THE UNITED STATES AND ALSO SEND WOMEN PROFESSIONALS TO QATAR. U.S. INFORMATION SERVICE FILMS, NEWS ARTICLES AND SPEAKERS PROGRAMS COULD BE VERY VALUABLE. QATAR HAS SHOWN CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN AID'S PROGRAM OF REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THIS PROVIDES ANOTHER EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ACCUSTOM QATARIS TO THE IDEA OF WOMEN WORKING AT PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL JOBS.

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(B) TREATMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS -- FROM THE SUBCONTINENT, ASIA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES -- MAY ALSO PRESENT A HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM. A LARGE NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE COUNTRY AS LABORERS ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. LITTLE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT EXISTS AND THE GATHERING OF THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE THE FIRST GOAL. THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE ON THIS MATTER WOULD SEEM TO BE POSITIVE AND THE REAL ABUSES, IF ANY, WOULD SEEM TO BE THE FAULT OF LABOR CONTRACTORS WHO SELL THE SERVICES OF THESE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS.

(C) THE U.S. SHOULD MAKE AN EFFORT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FUNCTIONING OF ISLAMIC LAW AND TRADITION IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS, TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE JUDICIAL AND POLICE SYSTEMS IN ORDER TO DETERMINE IF THERE ARE OTHER AREAS WHERE THE U.S. COULD MAKE A POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS CONTRIBUTION.

2. GOVERNMENT REACTION.

QATAR WOULD PROBABLY RESPOND IN A GENERALLY POSITIVE MANNER TO U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. GOVERNMENT LEADERS WOULD WELCOME AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS. THEY WOULD, HOUEVER, RESENT ANY ATTEMPTS TO FORCE CHANGES PARTICULARLY IN AREAS SUCH AS WOMEN'S RIGHTS WHERE THE STATUS IS A PRODUCT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

ALTHOUGH QATAR IS A NEWCOMER ON THE SCENE OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (IT HAS EXISTED AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE FOR ONLY SIX YEARS), GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CLOSELY FOLLOW MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL ISSUES. A U.S. DEMARCHE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO A QATARI RESPONSE CONDEMNING CONFIDENTIAL

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ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, AND ATTEMPTS TO SECURE U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE CONDEMNATION OR AT LEAST FOR INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS. CHRISTOPHER

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